

Paris, 27 July 2026

Press release

Prix Versailles 2026: The World's Most Beautiful Universities

Today, 27 July 2026, Prix Versailles is releasing the World's Most Beautiful Universities List 2026.

Bringing students, researchers and businesses together, the campuses these days are proving to be their own ecosystems, whose fundamental role can now be seen in the architectural excellence of their construction.

On the subject of this ambition, Jérôme Gouadain, Prix Versailles Secretary General, notes that:

“Without sidelining the objectives of efficiency and solemnity that have long dominated at academic institutions, universities are offering ever more attractive work environments for their students, faculty and staff. Expected to provide solutions to the major challenges that are emerging across the globe, particularly the issue of algorithm-assisted knowledge, they have claimed a position as outstanding laboratories that are deeply rooted in the tangible world. Campuses are becoming inspired, connected places where beauty is expressed not only in the form of building design but also in stronger ties to nature.

Today, thanks to the powerful aesthetics they display, these eight projects have reaffirmed our attachment to this shared endeavour.”

Three campuses from this List will also receive the further distinction of a World Title (Prix Versailles, Interior or Exterior), to be awarded at UNESCO Headquarters on 10 December next.

The awards discerned by the Prix Versailles aim to promote intelligent sustainability, in which culture serves and transcends the notion of the environment.

The next World Selections will be announced on 28 September for Passenger Stations and on 19 October for Sports.



PRIX VERSAILLES

WORLD'S MOST BEAUTIFUL UNIVERSITIES LIST 2026

UNSW Sydney

Health Translation Hub

Randwick, Australia

University of Cambridge

Ray Dolby Centre

Cambridge, United Kingdom

University of Oxford

Stephen A. Schwarzman Centre

Oxford, United Kingdom

University of Amsterdam

University Library

Amsterdam, Netherlands

University of Arkansas

Anthony Timberlands Center

Fayetteville, United States

Claremont McKenna College

Robert Day Sciences Center

Claremont, United States

Harvard University

David Rubenstein Treehouse

Boston, United States

Johns Hopkins University

Bloomberg Student Center

Baltimore, United States

*The Laureates are listed in the alphabetical order of the countries they represent
(based on their two-letter ISO 3166 country codes).*



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PRESENTATION OF THE LAUREATES

UNSW Sydney Health Translation Hub

Randwick, Australia

Located on Bidjigal Country, the UNSW Health Translation Hub calls to mind wind-carved coastal dunes.

The façade's complex system reduces solar radiation by around 60%, while maintaining an impression of airy transparency.

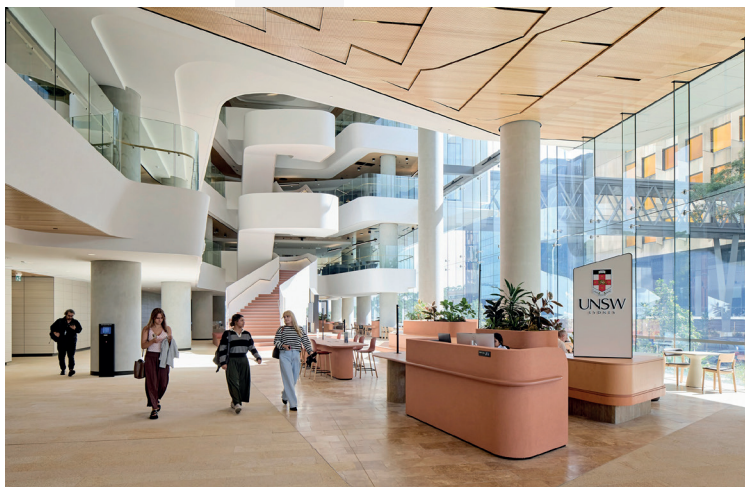
Architectus, the practice responsible for the project, also embedded an Indigenous reading of place into the landscape and public interiors, drawing on native flora with medicinal and cultural significance. Full of colour and warmth, and rich in texture, those details convey a distinctly non-institutional image.

Acting as a "super connector" within Sydney's Health Precinct, the structure is a complete re-conceptualisation of the hospital block, embodying the next generation of campuses, where research, education, clinical practice and industry are brought together within a single building. It fulfils the principle of comprehensive care – "from laboratory bench to clinical bedside" – by enabling the rapid translation of scientific discoveries into concrete medical applications.

Here, architectural audacity has given rise to a model that blends wellness with openness, while strengthening connections between people, place and Country.



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University of Cambridge Ray Dolby Centre

Cambridge, United Kingdom

Designed by Jestico + Whiles as the new home of the Cavendish Laboratory (Department of Physics), the Ray Dolby Centre is where cutting-edge architecture meets scientific innovation.

Named after the alumnus who famously invented the Dolby noise reduction system, this 32,900 m² research centre is the largest of its kind in the UK. It holds a total of 173 laboratories and 1,500 m² of cleanrooms, offices and collaboration space, all of which benefit from highly advanced technical facilities, including exceptional vibration, humidity and temperature control.

Just like its design, in which the Department was heavily involved, collaboration is central to day-to-day life at the Ray Dolby Centre. Light-filled concourses, communal spaces and open circulation encourage chance encounters between researchers, students and visitors.

The building is also open to the public, in the form of a quadruple-height atrium, as well as exhibition and outreach spaces.

At Cambridge, top-tier science and architecture are masterfully orchestrated for one and all to enjoy.



© Kilian O'Sullivan



© Kilian O'Sullivan



© Kilian O'Sullivan

University of Oxford Stephen A. Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities

Oxford, United Kingdom

Bearing the stamp of philanthropist Stephen A. Schwarzman, this new Centre co-locates Oxford University's different Humanities faculties for the first time: English Language and Literature, History, Linguistics, Philology and Phonetics, Medieval and Modern Languages, Music, Philosophy, and Theology and Religion. It also houses the Institute for Ethics in AI, the Oxford Internet Institute and the new Bodleian Humanities Library.

Designed by Hopkins Architects in the heart of the city's Radcliffe Observatory Quarter, the Centre is arranged around a spacious atrium topped by a spectacular dome. Clad in a mix of Clipsham stone and cream-coloured brick, the building melds harmoniously with the traditional palette of Oxford's architecture.

With some areas open to the general public, it offers a combination of teaching, research and cultural facilities, including a 500-seat concert hall, a theatre, a cinema and an exhibition space.

The ambition here recalls the strength and depth of the humanities, at a time that calls for some perspective in how we address the latest technological advances.



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University of Amsterdam University Library

Amsterdam, Netherlands



© Jannes Linders

The new University Library at UvA marks the flamboyant conversion of a listed former hospital complex, without altering its historical identity.

This project by MVSA Architects, in collaboration with Buro van Stigt, is amplified by an idea that was as simple as it was ambitious: to transform the inner courtyard into a vast atrium. This was the basis for the biomimetic roof, a slender, self-supporting steel structure inspired by the geometry of a leaf. Harmoniously straddling old and new without imposing on the historical fabric, it maximises daylight, enhances indoor comfort and creates a climatic buffer.

As the building's spatial and social heart, the atrium is anchored by its sculptural "Tree of Wisdom" staircase, which encourages movement, encounters and discovery.

Facing the city, the new façade is decorated with three-dimensional letters that reproduce a line from Martinus Nijhoff's poem "Awater" in 24 languages and 6 writing systems, in reference to the disciplines taught at UvA's Faculty of Humanities. A perfectly "readable" building that stimulates curiosity.



© Jannes Linders



© Jannes Linders

University of Arkansas Anthony Timberlands Center for Design and Materials Innovation

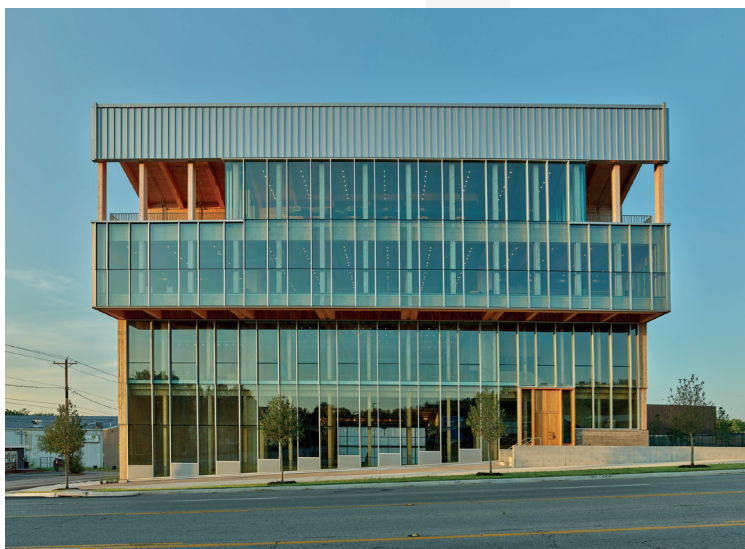
Fayetteville, United States

In their acceptance of the 2020 Pritzker Prize, Yvonne Farrell and Shelley McNamara remarked, "Architecture could be described as one of the most complex and important cultural activities on the planet". The Irish architects have a reverence for site-specific contexts. In this case, wood is an iconic material in Arkansas, as recalled by the business of the company that gave the facility its name.

Because the Center is dedicated to education, applied research and cutting-edge fabrication for the Fay Jones School of Architecture and Design, the architectural gesture was of vital importance. And the result is as splendid as it is unexpected.

More than a mere academic building, it is a veritable construction manual where students and researchers alike can discover the possibilities afforded by mass timber, on a 1:1 scale. The structure is entirely exposed and features a jagged roof, laboratories, studios and an auditorium arranged around an immense workshop with views of the city, transforming the architecture itself into an educational tool.

The generous spaces, natural light and high ecological standards extend the demonstration into a living, breathing proof of concept.



© Timothy Hursley



© Timothy Hursley



© Timothy Hursley

Claremont McKenna College Robert Day Sciences Center

Claremont, United States

The 13,500 m² Robert Day Sciences Center at Claremont McKenna College is a hub for computer science, data science and life sciences. It illustrates the new gospel of university campuses: creating, within a single structure, an environment designed to foster collaboration across traditionally separated fields.

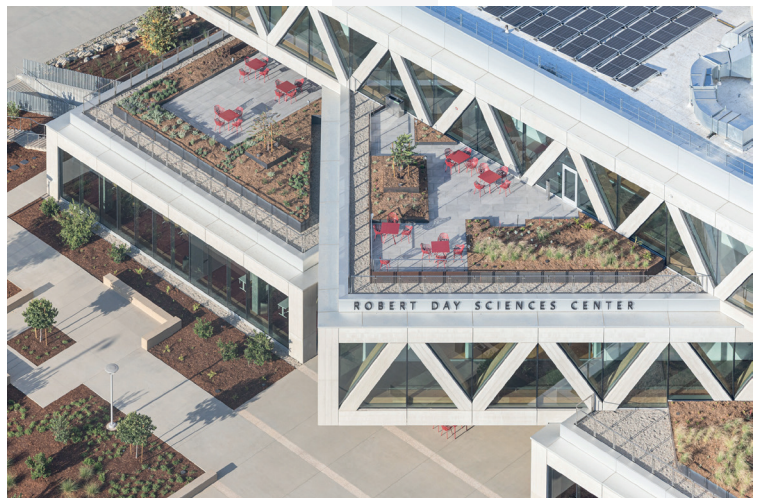
The spectacular architecture, from the imagination of Bjarke Ingels Group (BIG), is an expression of the alignment between building and teaching, with a central atrium derived from the rotation of a set of superimposed volumes – with each pair pivoted 45 degrees from the floor below – providing for laboratory transparency and encouraging interdisciplinary exchanges. Eight rooftop terraces, many collaborative spaces and open walkways are further extensions of this notion of decompartmentalised learning.

The façades, made of panels of reinforced concrete, simulate a wood-like texture while delivering the durability and fire resistance required for a scientific laboratory.

A major landmark on campus and the symbol of an integrated approach to the sciences, the Robert Day Sciences Center is an educational tool in and of itself for its community of students.



© Laurian Ghinitoiu



© Laurian Ghinitoiu



© Laurian Ghinitoiu

Harvard University David Rubenstein Treehouse

Boston, United States



© Jason O'Rear



© Jason O'Rear

Located within Enterprise Research Campus, the David Rubenstein Treehouse has reinvented the concept of the university conference centre as an open, welcoming destination that connects people to nature. Designed to stimulate exchanges with opinion leaders, industry and the local community, the building is true to its name, invoking the feeling of being nested high up inside a treetop cabin.

Guided toward the interior, visitors ascend along a sculptural central staircase wrapped around freestanding elevators before arriving at Canopy Hall – the project's signature gathering space – and its panoramic terrace.

Harvard's first building to showcase both mass timber construction and low-carbon concrete, the Rubenstein Treehouse also features high-performance systems that considerably reduce its ecological impact while enhancing occupant well-being.

With honesty and elegance, the building is a statement by architect Jeanne Gang (a Harvard alumna and professor) in favour of the environmental stewardship of facilities that interact with their settings and strengthen human connection.



© Jason O'Rear

Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg Student Center

Baltimore, United States

A cascading village capped with 29 roofs installed with close to 1,000 solar panels in total: the Homewood campus's new social and cultural hub promises to transform the university experience on a lasting basis.

The Bloomberg Student Center, the university's first facility solely dedicated to student life, designed by Bjarke Ingels Group (BIG) and interior architect Rockwell Group, comprises a series of timber pavilions that instinctually hug the hillside, providing direct entry to all four storeys.

Its many sun-drenched meeting areas represent the materialisation of an ambition of providing a sprawling "living room" for student use.

More than 200 student organisations have found a home here, along with a performance space, art studios, dance studios, music rehearsal spaces, a digital media centre and a dining hall. All these vital, non-academic services support informal learning, creativity and the community's well-being, as a complement to the university's rigorous courses of study.

Student input feels implicit in this original and meticulous urban design, given the architecture's commitment to sociability while fully addressing current and future sustainability issues.



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